

Lee County Medical Society

Bulletin

Physicians Caring for Our Community



know your risks
**Dispensing
Sample
Meds**

**Get Ready
to HIRE!**
annual job fair

**Event
Calendar**

*plan your year
for maximum
outreach*



BULLETIN

Lee County Medical Society is a Virtual Operation
Mailbox address: 5781 Lee Boulevard, Suite 208-104
Lehigh Acres, FL 33971
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LCMS DISCLOSURE POLICY
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Lee County Medical Society Mission Statement

The mission of Lee County Medical Society is to advocate for physicians and their relationships with patients; promote public health and uphold the professionalism of the practice of medicine.

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*Members are encouraged to submit photos to be considered for the Bulletin cover.
Must be large format/300dpi. Email photos to marketing@lcmsfl.org*

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

FRI, MAR 14th
5:30pm - 7:30pm **LCMS Cocktail Hour**
Host: Advanced Pain Management & Spine Specialists
8255 College Parkway, Ft. Myers

THU, MAR 27th
6:30pm - 8:30pm **LCMS Member Meeting**
Host: FineMark National Bank & Trust
8695 College Parkway, Ste. 100, Ft. Myers

FRI, APR 4th
TBD **LCMS Family Event**
Pickleball Tournament
Location: TBD

TUE, APR 8th
11:30am - 1:00pm **Practice Administrators Luncheon**
KJ's Steakhouse
10950 S Clevelan Avenue, Ft. Myers
Sponsor: First Citizens Bank

FRI, APR 11th
5:30pm - 7:30pm **LCMS Cocktail Hour**
Host: Precision Healthcare Specialists
9341 Marketplace Road, Ft. Myers

SAT, APR 12th
10:00am - 2:00pm **LCMS Medical Provider Job Fair**
Collaboratory
2031 Jackson Street, Ste. 100, Ft. Myers

FRI, MAY 2nd
5:30pm - 7:30pm **LCMS Cocktail Hour**
Host: Florida Cancer Specialists & Research Institute
8440 Murano Del Lago Dr., Estero

THU, MAY 15th
6:30pm - 8:30pm **LCMS Member Meeting**
Host: FineMark National Bank & Trust
8695 College Parkway, Ste. 100, Ft. Myers

RVSP to LCMS events at www.lcmsfl.org

NEW MEMBERS



Lisa Balistreri, MD
Rheumatology
Lee Physician Group
2441 Surfside Blvd., Ste. 106
Cape Coral, FL 33914
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www.leehealth.org



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General Practice
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Urology Experts
12995 S Cleveland Ave., Ste. 184A
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www.urologyexperts.com



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Lee Physician Group
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239-343-6202
www.leehealth.org



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9981 S HealthPark Dr.
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239-343-9710
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Internal Medicine
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13813 Metro Pkwy.
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www.millenniumphysician.com



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9981 S HealthPark Dr.
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239-343-5000
www.leehealth.org



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42880 Crescent Loop, Ste. 110
Babcock Ranch, FL 33982
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www.leehealth.org



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Lee Physician Group
2780 Cleveland Ave., Ste. 709
Fort Myers, FL 33901
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www.leehealth.org



Josiah Freemyer, MD
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Gulf Coast Medical Center
13681 Doctors Way
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239-343-0434
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8260 Gladiolus Dr.
Fort Myers, FL 33908
239-437-5755
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Fort Myers, FL 33907
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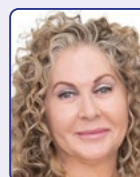
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General Surgery
Assoc. in General & Vascular
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21 Barkley Circle
Fort Myers, FL 33908
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FORTIFYING OUR VOICE FOR PHYSICIANS AND THE COMMUNITY

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: Gamini Soori, MD, MBA

As your President, it is my tremendous privilege to lead the Lee County Medical Society in the coming year. I am excited to energetically carry out the current programs of our society.

I also look forward to strategically expanding its mission to serve our three constituencies: our physicians, our patients, and our community at large. With an expanded Board of Governors, we have an ambitious agenda, which we look forward to rolling out in the coming months.

As stated in the Society's mission, we advocate for the physicians in our county. We help support physician practices in multiple ways, and your Society has done an impressive job, especially during the COVID Pandemic and recent hurricanes. The annual job fare hosted by LCMS has been well received by practices in their recruiting efforts, and the LCMS Physician Wellness Program continues to remain well funded and well utilized.

This year we have created a formal Resolution Committee to solicit, review and discuss physician practice concerns. We plan to generate actionable resolutions, which we can take up the channels of organized medicine via FMA and AMA to the Florida Legislature and U.S. Congress to accomplish meaningful change. I welcome your ideas and active participation in this process.

Our mission to help our patients remains strong, and our members provide commendable service through our WeCare Program for indigent individuals. As you are aware, our Annual Awards Ceremony recognizes our physician champions in these

worthy efforts. We look forward to creating additional ways our society can help our patients, and welcome your thoughts and suggestions.



LCMS is committed to the welfare of our Lee County community, and we participate in multiple ways, in collaboration with other local agencies. As the organization representing the physician body of our community, we recognize our role and responsibility in the wellness of our citizens. In addition to continuing our current community-related programs, we will actively look forward to opportunities through local public health organizations, the Chamber of Commerce, and other entities.

LCMS is only as strong as its members, and expanding our membership is one of my strategic priorities. We have created a membership working group to stay continually engaged in this important task. Expanded, engaged and vibrant membership is critical for the vitality and sustainability of our esteemed and venerable society, which will celebrate its centenary in 2027.

Thank you for the privilege of being your President, and along with your newly installed Board of Governors, we enthusiastically seek to fulfill the mission of your society to our utmost ability!

MEMBER NEWS

Dr. Fahimy Saoud has been awarded the prestigious King Charles III Coronation Medal in recognition of her community leadership and engagement.

Congratulations to **Dr. Jose Pacheco** and **Dr. Peter Scott** on their recent retirement from Radiology Regional.

Dr. Nadia Kazim has joined Stephen Laquis, MD, FACS at Ophthalmic Facial Plastic Surgery Specialists.

Dr. Magali Van den Bergh, Dr. Venkata Parsa, and **Dr. Shivtaji Mann** with Florida Oncology & Hematology, have permanently relocated their Fort Myers clinic to 14551 Hope Center Loop, Fort Myers. They will continue to see patients on 326 Del Prado N, Ste. 301, in Cape Coral, as well.

FELLOWSHIP APPLICATIONS OPEN

The Physicians Foundation is accepting applications for its esteemed Fellowship Program. This program is designed for new and early-career physicians to advance their leadership skills and focus on addressing drivers of health (DOH) – or the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. This unique opportunity is open to physicians who demonstrate experience or interest in DOH, physician leadership, health policy, health equity and care delivery innovation. Includes a 12-month stipend of \$24,000 as well as reimbursement for travel and lodging. Apply at www.physiciansfoundation.org/fellowship-program

OFFICE SPACE FOR LEASE

Professional office space available immediately. Property fronts Summerlin Rd., just south of Colonial Blvd with great signage visibility on Summerlin. Central location only minutes to Cape Coral and downtown Fort Myers. 975 sf with 2 rooms, 1 restroom, reception area and waiting area. Call (239) 275-8128 for details.

LEE COUNTY GROWTH = OPPORTUNITY

THE RAMIREZ REPORT: Julie Ramirez, CAE, LCMS Executive Director



As your Medical Society Executive Director, I have the unique opportunity to be included on the Lee County Horizon Council board of directors.

The Horizon Council is a public-private partnership that supports the Lee County Economic Development Office. I first heard about the Horizon Council in 2020, when the Lee County Industrial Development Authority, a subsidiary of the HC, generously gave our Medical Society a monetary grant to supply PPE to our medical community. After this

introduction, I was recommended to be a board member representing our physician community. I have to say, being on the Council board is enlightening, as I learn about the growing Lee County business community. The Horizon Council and the Horizon Council Foundation are also responsible for bringing the Edison Awards and the Industry Appreciation Awards to Lee County every year. Here are some statistics to see how Lee County is growing:

SIGNIFICANT 2024 LEE COUNTY STATISTICS

- ★ Fort Myers is the **#1 Fastest Growing** U.S. City (U.S. News)
- ★ Cape Coral **Ranked #2** for Homebuyers (Wallet Hub)
- ↑ **9.6% INCREASE**, Lee County Population: **846,573**
- ↑ **6.4% INCREASE**, Lee County Employment: **363,910**
- ★ **12,000 NEW RESIDENTS** in 2024
- ★ **13,700 WORKERS** looking for jobs in Lee County
- ↑ **52% INCREASE**, Sales Tax Collection: **\$76,000,000**
- ↑ **3.5% INCREASE**, Business Openings in 2024: **3,252**

Source: Horizon Council



REGISTER TODAY!

Saturday
May 3, 2025
9:30am - 7:30pm
Hyatt House • Naples

2025 South Florida
Women Physicians Retreat

Nurturing Wellness for
Women Physicians:
**Career, Family, and
Fertility Conference**

The county medical societies of Broward, Collier, Dade, Hillsborough, Lee, Manatee, Palm Beach & Sarasota cordially invite you to the first Women Physicians Retreat. This educational and networking event will feature presentations, group discussions, lunch, and an evening reception, specifically designed for women physicians in Florida.

DISPENSING SAMPLE MEDICATIONS: RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Debra Kane Hill, MBA, RN, Senior Patient Safety Risk Manager, The Doctors Company, Part of TDC Group

Dispensing free sample medications to patients, a common practice in medical and dental offices, can provide many benefits for both patients and practitioners. Dispensing sample medications can, however, create risks and patient safety issues—especially for offices that take a casual approach toward the sample medication supply.

Benefits

With safeguards in place, sample medications can contribute to improved patient outcomes and generate goodwill between the practitioner and the patient. Free sample medications are convenient for patients—particularly those who lack financial or transportation resources—and can improve timeliness and compliance with medication regimens. Sample medications also allow patients to try new and sometimes costly prescriptions on a trial basis to determine if they are effective and without unwanted side effects.

Potential Issues

Failure to control access to the sample drug supply can result in unauthorized individuals using sample medications without supervision. Because samples are usually brand-name medications that are newer to the market, they may have unforeseen side effects or be more costly for the patient in the long-term once the sample supply is depleted.

Practices lacking a formal system for managing sample medications might inadvertently provide medications to patients without proper instructions or labeling or distribute medications to individuals without thorough assessment. Allergies and contraindications might also be overlooked, and necessary patient record documentation may be omitted. In an office setting, the safety checks normally performed by pharmacists are often removed from the dispensing process—including required labeling, instructions, and evaluation for contraindications with other medications or medical conditions. The lack of a formal system can result in patient harm and compromised regulatory compliance, creating considerable liability for the practitioner.

Sample Medication Misuse

Without safeguards, staff, patients, and others with office access can divert samples to themselves, friends, and family without

the practitioner's knowledge and proper management. Consider the following scenarios involving sample medication misuse:

- Office staff allowed drug representatives to have full access to the sample closet without supervision, giving them free access to samples from other companies.
- Drug representatives gave sample medications to office staff or the practitioner without documentation or practice accountability.
- Office staff sold or bartered sample medications with other practices. In one case, ob/gyn practice staff traded birth control pills for cosmetic samples with dermatology practice staff in the same building.
- A medical assistant “treated” her family member for a chronic cough for several months with various antibiotics from the sample medication closet. The family member received no medical evaluation, and the practice physician was entirely unaware of this activity. The family member was later diagnosed with lung carcinoma, and the family reported the physician to the medical board for negligence and lack of supervision.
- A person who was homeless was found helping himself to the sample drug closet located near the practice's unlocked back door.
- A patient was found filling her purse with sample medications while waiting in the exam room to see the practitioner.
- A medical assistant accidentally retrieved the wrong medication from the sample medication closet and handed it directly to the patient.
- A patient's allergies were not checked when the sample medication was dispensed. The patient took the medication, went into anaphylactic shock, and was admitted to the hospital on life support.

Risky Situations

We have observed the following unsafe situations in offices that have no formal sample medication policies in place:

- Failure to follow applicable state and federal regulations governing sample medications.
- Lack of record keeping (e.g., no logs) for medications received and dispensed.
- Inability to track drug recalls (e.g., not documenting lot numbers).



- Improper storage system (e.g., inattention to manufacturers' storage recommendations or storing samples alphabetically, which can result in medication errors).
- Improper storage location (e.g., storing samples in exam rooms that are accessible to patients or in areas that are not routinely monitored).
- Failure to secure sample medications under lock and key, which can result in theft and misuse by patients and staff.
- Failure to label sample medications according to state and federal guidelines, resulting in patient medication errors (including potential confusion by family members, who might take the unlabeled medication in error).
- Inattention to expiration dates.
- Incomplete patient instructions or failure to provide written instructions in a language the patient can understand. Verbal instructions are easily confused or forgotten.
- Incomplete patient assessment and monitoring.
- Incomplete documentation in the patient's health record, including failure to list a sample medication on the patient's medication list.

Patient Safety Strategies

Sample medications must be handled with the same level of accountability and security as other prescription medications—as required by the standard of care, federal and state pharmaceutical laws and regulations, and accrediting organizations. Practitioners have the same duty of care to patients receiving sample medications as they have to patients receiving prescriptions.

Consider implementing the following safety guidelines for drug samples in your practice:

Practice Policies and Procedures

- Implement detailed policies and procedures that address sample medication inventory, storage, access, tracking, documentation, and patient care management.
- Provide and document training for your staff.

Drug Storage and Access

- Store, secure, and track samples to prevent inappropriate access and loss.
- Allow only designated clinicians and staff to access the drug supply.
- Organize medications by drug type when setting up sample medication storage. Never place sample medications in alphabetical order or next to drugs that have look-alike and sound-alike (LASA) names. (See the Institute for Safe Medication Practices for a list of confused drug names and strategies for reducing dispensing errors.)
- Assign staff to monitor and document safe storage per manufacturers' recommendations and to check medications for expiration.
- Follow state and federal guidelines for disposing of expired medications.
- Maintain logs in administrative files.

Drug Dispensing

- Never allow staff to provide samples to anyone without practitioner orders, practitioner supervision, and patient record documentation. Give sample medications only when prescribed by a licensed practitioner with prescriptive authority.
- Label samples with prescribing information and instructions as required by law.

Patient Record Documentation

- Document any dispensed samples in the patient record. Include the name of the drug, strength, lot number, manufacturer, instructions provided, and discussion of potential side effects.
- Provide written patient education regarding the medication and document the education in the patient's record.
- Obtain and document informed consent from the patient when appropriate (e.g., for the type of medication, possible side effects, or the patient's first use of the medication).

Administrative Logs

- Maintain administrative records to log a sample medication's receipt into the practice and to track its inventory and access. Creating a separate log for each medication simplifies the tracking process. Include the drug name, dosage, manufacturer, lot number, expiration date, date and quantity received by the practice, and by whom.
- Maintain administrative records to log a sample medication that is dispensed (separate from the patient record). This allows the practice to identify patients in the event of a medication recall. Creating a separate log for each medication simplifies the tracking process. Include the date dispensed, patient name, drug name, dosage, lot number, expiration date, quantity dispensed, and by whom.
- Establish a system for identifying and managing drug recalls. (For more information, see the FDA drug recall guidance.)
- Assign administrative staff to review logs routinely for any inconsistencies.

Creating a system for tracking and dispensing sample medications can be a significant undertaking, but it provides many benefits for the practice and the patient.

The guidelines suggested here are not rules, do not constitute legal advice, and do not ensure a successful outcome. The ultimate decision regarding the appropriateness of any treatment must be made by each healthcare provider considering the circumstances of the individual situation and in accordance with the laws of the jurisdiction in which the care is rendered.

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WANT TO BOOST REFERRALS?

Partner with the Society to get your message in front of physicians eager to hear it!
Contact marketing@lcmsfl.org

SALLY J. PIMENTEL DEAF & HARD OF HEARING CENTER

by: Amy Turner, Executive Director

Introducing an invaluable resource in our community that can greatly enhance the services you provide to patients who are deaf or hard of hearing. **The Sally J. Pimentel Deaf & Hard of Hearing Center**, based in Fort Myers, is dedicated to empowering and supporting the deaf and hard-of-hearing community throughout Lee, Charlotte, Collier, Hendry, and Glades counties.

Founded in 1983 and named in honor of Sally J. Pimentel—a lifelong educator and advocate for deaf services—the Center provides vital support and services for children, adults, their families, and their surrounding networks. Its mission is to empower Southwest Florida’s deaf and hard-of-hearing citizens and their families through education, advocacy, and community involvement.

The Center offers a wide range of services, including:

- **Sign Language Interpreting Services:** Available for medical offices, legal offices, title companies, notaries, and various business needs.
- **Free Telephone Equipment Loan Program:** Ensures accessibility for individuals with hearing impairments.
- **Deaf Mentor & Education Program:** Guides personal and professional growth.
- **American Sign Language (ASL) Classes:** Offered to help bridge communication gaps.
- **Information/Referral Services:** Connecting individuals

to the resources they need.

- **Outreach Presentations:** Raising awareness about the needs of the deaf and hard-of-hearing community.
- **Employment Assistance:** Supporting job seekers with disabilities.
- **Visual Communication Center and Advocacy:** Empowering individuals with adaptive equipment and advocacy.
- **Volunteer Opportunities:** Engaging the community in meaningful ways.

If you have patients who are deaf or hard of hearing, the Center can be an essential partner in ensuring they receive the care and support they need. From interpretation services to advocacy, their resources are designed to remove barriers and improve accessibility for patients in healthcare settings.

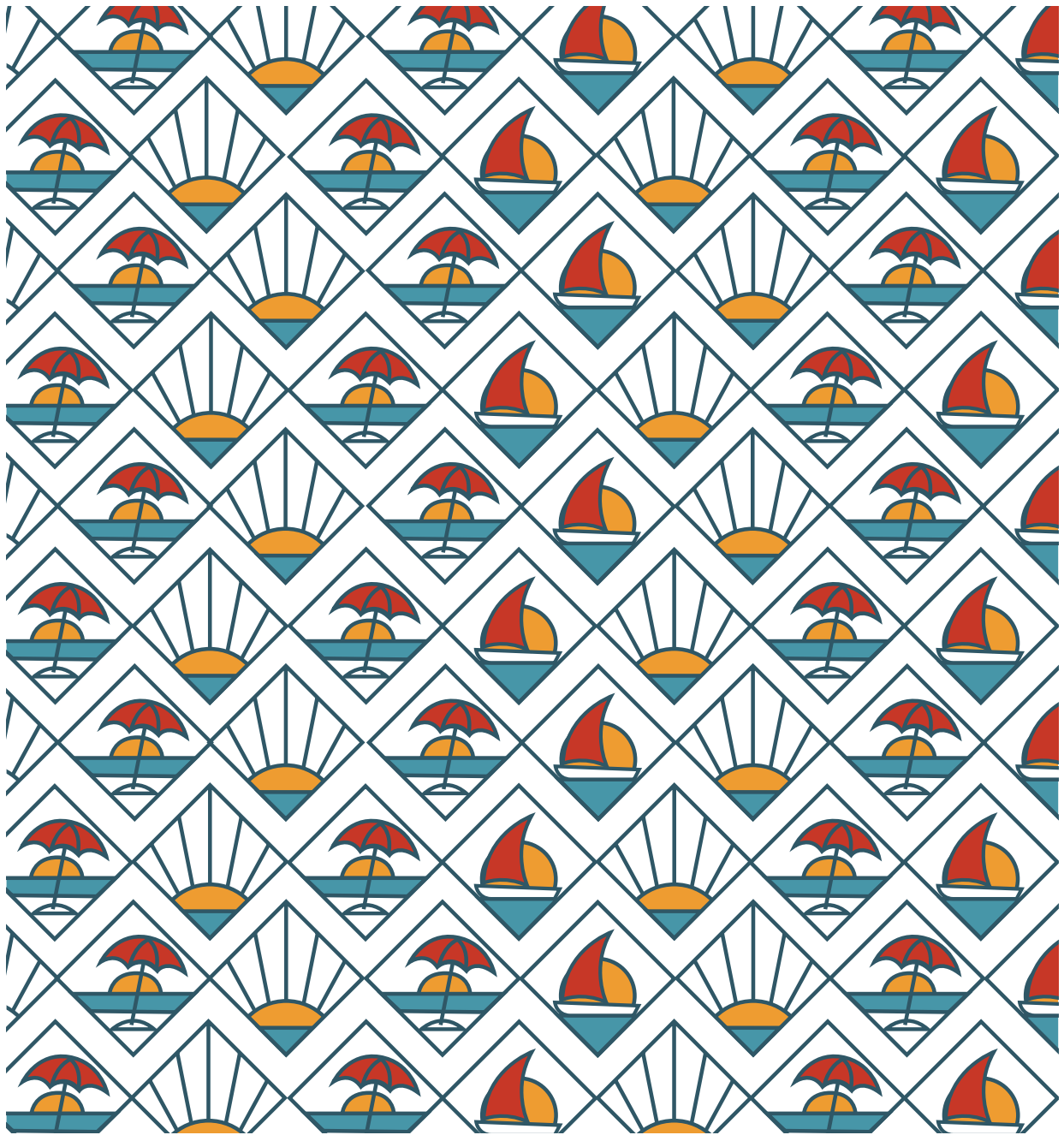
To request an interpreter 24/7, please call 239-823-4975. For more information or to explore how you can collaborate with the **Sally J. Pimentel Deaf & Hard of Hearing Center**, please visit the website or contact them directly at:

1860 Boy Scout Dr. B208
Fort Myers, FL 33907
(239) 461-0334 Office
(239) 247-5821 Video Phone
(239) 461-0434 Fax
www.dhhc.life

2025 INSTALLATION PHOTOS

Over 75 Lee County physicians and guests celebrated the installation of the 2025 Board of Directors on January 30th at the Doubletree in Bell Tower. LCMS Past President and Board of Governor member Dr. Daniel De La Torre performed the installation ceremony. Below are photos from the event. More photos on the LCMS Facebook page.





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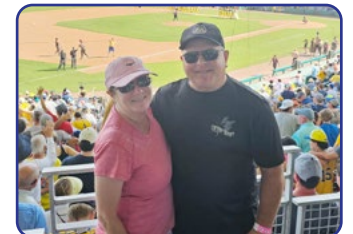
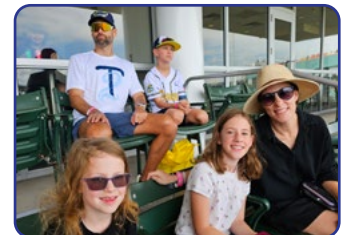
FEBRUARY COCKTAIL HOUR PHOTOS

Advocate Radiation Oncology hosted the LCMS February 7th Cocktail Hour and took members on a tour of its new state-of-the-art facility in Estero. Photos courtesy of Advocate Radiation Oncology. More photos on the [LCMS Facebook](#) page.



SAVANNAH BANANAS BASEBALL GAME FOUNDATION FUNDRAISER

Members and their families enjoyed the zanny antics of the Savannah Bananas baseball team during a baseball game against the Party Animals at JetBlue Park on Sunday, February 16, 2025. The event was an LCMS Foundation "friend" and "fund" raiser.





Lee County Medical Society invites you
to a Medical Provider

JOB FAIR

SATURDAY, APRIL 12, 2025

10:00am – 2:00PM

The Collaboratory, 2031 Jackson St, Fort Myers, FL 33901

All Medical Providers* Seeking Employment **Attend for FREE!**

*Licensed ARNPs, PAs, NPs, AAs, CRNAs, Lab or Rad Techs, MAs, Nurses, Billers, Managers & Administrators.
No registration necessary. Walk-ins encouraged!

Participating employers are seeking experienced medical professionals in various subspecialties.
Bring many copies of your resume, certification details and relevant transcripts.

LOOKING TO HIRE? Secure a table for \$100 to recruit at this event.
Scan the QR Code or go to www.lcmsfl.org/events

Includes: Entry for two practice employees, one 6' display table, two chairs,
at least one open job listing and your contact details displayed on the
in-room big screen, practice name on job fair webpage, and voucher
for one free job posting on the LCMS online Job Board (good through 2025).



In collaboration with

**Florida Gulf Coast University
Kaiser University
Nova Southeastern University**

An equal opportunity employer program. All applicants will be considered for employment regardless of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, veteran or disability status. Pre-employment drug testing may be required.
Auxiliary aide assistance for individuals with disabilities can be made available upon request by contacting LCMS
five (5) days prior to the event at (239) 936-1645.



5781 Lee Boulevard, Suite 208-104
Lehigh Acres, FL 33971

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

